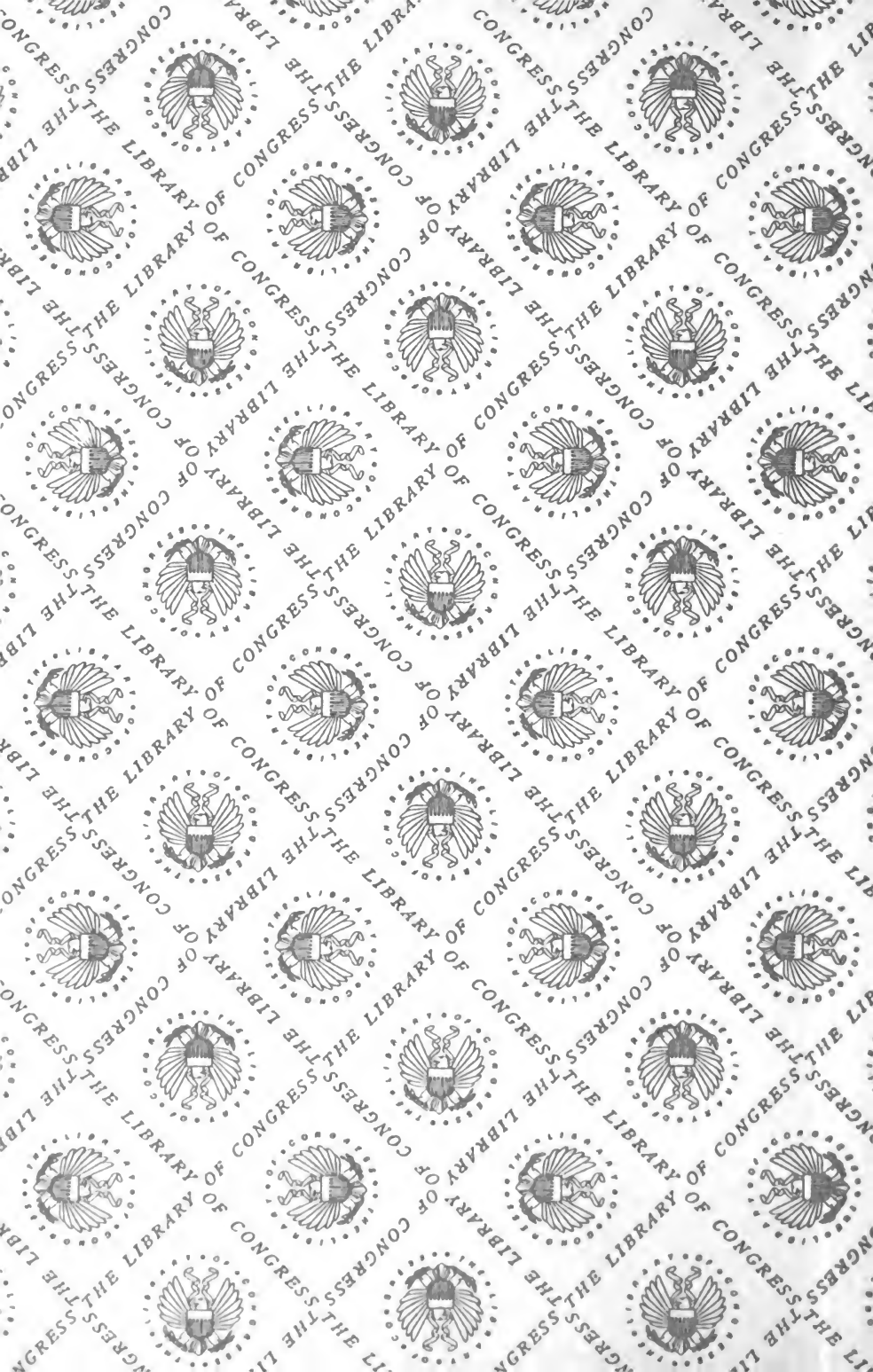
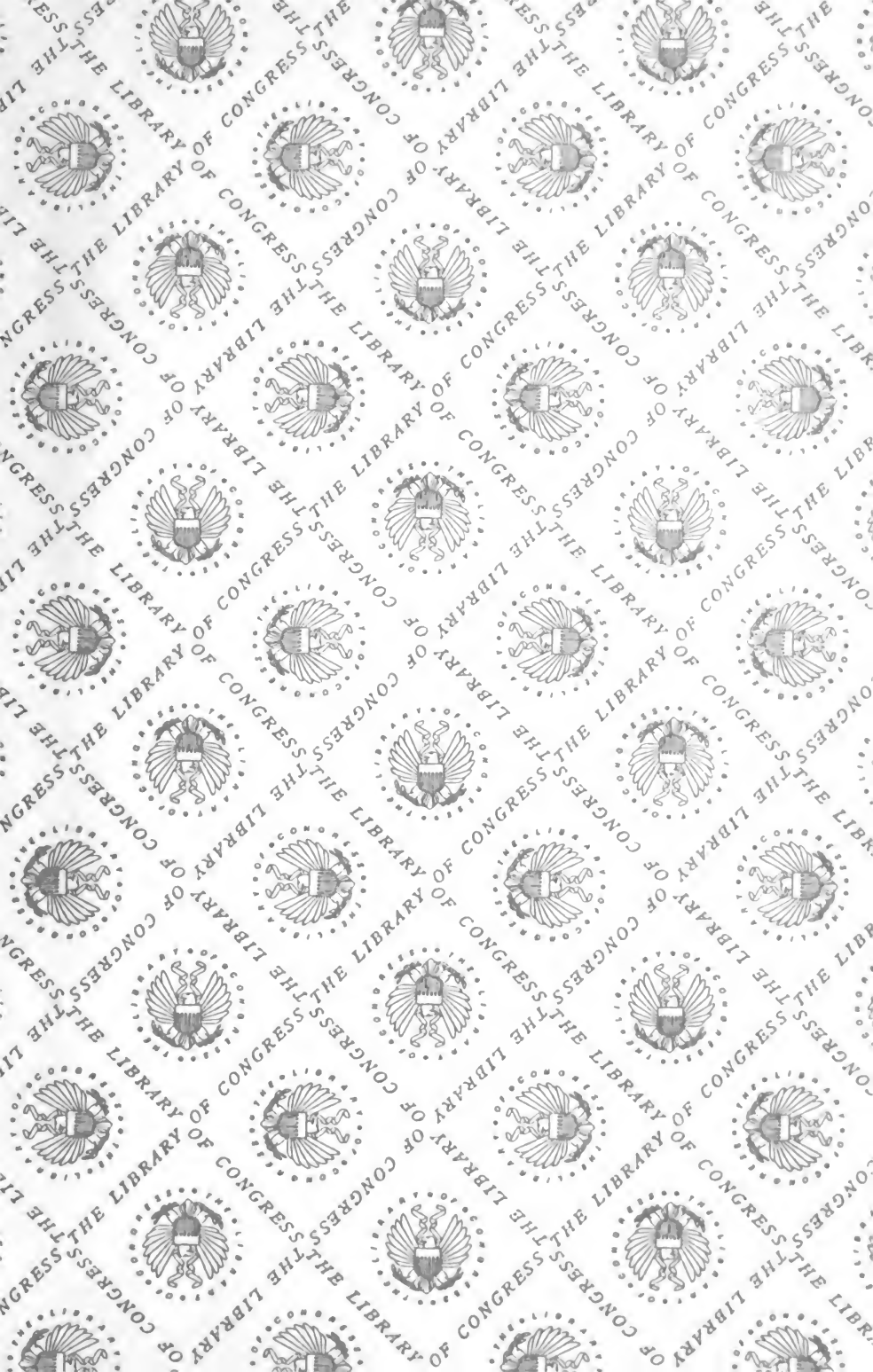


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1919





MILESTONE



OSCAR WILDER CRAIK

MILESTONE

This little book is a milestone
in a man's career.

Any man dedicates his honest work
primarily to the great sources of in-
spiration—his God and his parents.

OSCAR WILDER CRAIK

II

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Dedication

Realizing the many shortcomings of these poems as works of art, I still want to dedicate my effort and my thought to the people who have made Sioux City for me such a very pleasant home.

WILLIAM W. WOOD

MY FOUR SONS.

Bonny boys! bonny boys!
 Playing in the sun
 Care free and happy
 Life is just begun;
 Babyhood behind you
 Boyhood yet to come,
 Blessings on thee, little men,
 While the race is run.

Noble lads! Noble lads!
 Two decades gone;
 Earnest and serious
 Into men you've grown.
 School days and college days,
 And soldier days have flown—
 Blessings on thee, big men,
 Through all the years to come.

Manly men! manly men!
 May you ever be—
 Upright and honest,
 Clothed with humility;
 Clean men, devout men,
 Not afraid to die—
 God's peace be with you, precious men,
 Through all eternity!

Your Mother, Nellie Wilder Craik.

TO MY LOVE.

Whose Love I am not.

Oh, the soft wind blows through my hair, Love,
And the breath of Spring on my face,
But never so soft as thy hands, Love.
Nor is Spring so sweet as thy grace.

Oh, the great, blue sky is so vast, Love,
And the night-noise entrancing to hear.
But Heaven not so deep as thine eyes, Love.
Nor is night as thy voice so dear.

And at night only thou art my dream, Love.
In the daytime my thought is of thee.
And thoughts, dreams, alone my reward, Love.
For thou hast no love, Dear, for me.

THE DREAM.

Severed ties are never ended,
Unseen cords still cling so fast;
Ghosts of a dream still live behind,
Deep buried, deep in heart and mind.
They glow into flame at beauty's call;
A radiant sunset, a waterfall,
An expanse of sea tossed white and blue,
Or the sign of friendship, faithful, true.
And oh how the memory burns me:
Oh what a deep, sweet pain;
I feel that our parting was only a dream.
I feel that we love again!
I am happy a little while living the past;
But I know the delusion, so dear, will not last.
Then reality comes,
I'm my dull self again:
And I live for my dream to return.

THE ANSWER.

So God Almighty ruleth on and on.
 Each hour great men are dead, and new men born.
 Years, months, or minutes, weeks, or days, or hours,
 Life, death, eternity, what do they count?
 Sorrow and joy, what is there in it all?
 Be a man of weak or mighty powers,
 Be his wealth of great or small amount,
 What value these when he must hear the call?
 We live to die. We live to make new life,
 Which then does like as we, and passes on.
 We strive and sweat, we know not to what end.
 We rob, we cheat, we curse; and as we bend
 Our mortal backs to an immortal task
 We pause awhile; we think; and then we ask
 Why are we born? Why live? Why die?
 What is this universe? And from the sky
 There peals the answer, saying: "It is I."

Lord, Lord, thy will be done;
 Do with us what Thou wilt.
 And when we've run
 This little breath of Time which we call Life.
 Then still, Lord, are we Thine.
 But only take us, hold us in Thy light,
 Show us then Thy glory, Heavenly might,
 Let us for a short, short instant there—
 Short as the space between two silences—
 Stand in Thy presence, and though torn with fear
 Know and be known by Thy all-loving grace,
 See for a moment Thy all-radiant face—
 Then condemn to everlasting death.

And as I write there comes to me a breath.
 As light it whispers as the glow of dawn:
 "There is no death,
 For God Almighty ruleth on and on."

REPENTANCE.

To a Mother I had hurt.
Noble Mother, sweet adored one,
Blest of God, that you are woman,
Home of God, an earthly Heaven,
In whose gentle soul is woven
All good which to earth is given;
Pardon me, that I have grieved
You I love so well!

You are mankind's Burden Bearer,
Christ and you alone the wearer
Of our crown of thorns so bitter.
And that God who made you Mother
Calls you "Woman." What is greater!
All is yours which we can offer,
Man's repentant tears.

NINETY AND NINE.

In a hospital ward.

An old sick man,
And a wee sick boy.
Two weakened bodies,
Two hearts of joy.
A wrinkled hand
Sways a palm-leaf fan.
The dear wee boy,
And the nice old man.

A bandaged eye,
And a bandaged ear.
Some murmured thanks,
Which the man can't hear.
The man drops tears,
Which the boy can't see;
But their hand-clasp speaks
Of all sanctity.

NIGHT AND LIFE.

The sky at night, how like ambition's world.
 The stars that shine in space beyond, how like
 Our separate hopes which gleam in vast unknown.
 For, as the evening star, the first to appear,
 So shines the hope that now is our chief aim.
 Night deepens then, and other stars are seen;
 New longings creep into our sphere of life.
 The night advances, our course runs its way;
 Each shining, twinkling star to us a will,
 A wish, we vainly yearning gaze upon.
 Aye, as the stars, we only gaze upon.
 For not in earthly strength is power to do.
 Say where's the man would claim he rules the heavens?
 And who'd attempt to master his own fate?
 In Heaven the God of All alone has power,
 Just so by Him our lives on earth are ruled.
 To us on earth the stars are far and small,
 To Him even so our lives are distant things.

Nocturnal heaven is often filled with clouds;
 Our lives are sometimes full of dark events.
 But through those clouds the moon glides forth at last,
 Not seen at once, but shedding silver light
 On all the clouds around, then seen in full.
 So comes fulfillment of one wish of ours
 And lights up all our clouds to happy life;
 And for the moment we are all content.
 And yet what comes to night, to moon, to stars?
 Lo, ere the night has reigned, accomplished aught.
 Before the moon has reached the height of heaven,
 And while the stars are blinking in their space,
 Now comes the dawn, and all the night must go.
 How feebly weak the darkness fights to stay;
 The moon grows pale, by daylight now outshone;
 The stars are gone, the clouds are changed to gold;
 A burst of glory now o'er all the world.
 And, heralded by every joy of earth,
 The sun is here, the mighty sun of day!

So, when we've struggled all through human life,
 When every hope we've loved has slipped our grasp,
 All worn by trial, and broken to the soul—
 The Eternal Son comes forth to claim His own.
 Our stars of hope, the moon of our desire
 Are dazzled out by glory of the Son,
 Our clouds of pain with Heavenly radiance lit;
 For here the Son, the God of life, of love,
 The only Son of all accomplishment,
 The Son of everlasting Life in Heaven,
 Now he doth rule our world, and we are His.
 And through eternity we'll be His stars.
 Night nevermore, the Day of Life is ours.

CHEER UP!

*To one of my camp boys who was repenting some
"first offense."*

Boy, give me your hand.
Your sin is not so great;
Although in sorrow do I say, "And you?"
I know that you've done wrong,
'Tis all men's earthly fate;
But God still rules our souls—know this be true!

Boy, be not cast down.
Look up and face your sin;
You know that it was done against your will.
But now the thing is done,
You've let the evil in;
Just drive it out 'ere it has worked more ill.

Boy, you are not bad.
Why do you think you are?
'Tis hard indeed to lead a perfect life.
The thought of such is good;
Fulfillment not so far;
Such joy we'll see when through this mortal strife.

The evil is not you,
Although you are to blame.
It is the thing that stands 'twixt Heaven and earth.
'Tis something in us all,
In you and me the same,
And it was in you when you had your birth.

Boy, give me your hand.
Those good tears in your eyes,
Your lips all trembling, and your body, too,
Your face deep-flushed in shame,
Those broken, quivering sighs—
Those are the things which show the really you.

A DESERTED CAMP.

*Just after the boys have gone. Y. M. C. A. Camp,
New Hampshire.*

Lingering echoes of the farewell taps
Cling like lover's kisses o'er the hill,
Airy gusts of mist like parting sighs
Quiver in the breeze that stirs the lake;
And where the camp-fire's dying embers lie
Puffs of smoke float up in lonesome wails.
Here and there, half seen or heard or felt,
A spectral face, a voice, a sturdy hand
Startles the birds and bees, then vanishes.
For all forsaken now the woods and lake
Where yesterday young boys had drunk their fill
Of Nature's sweet delights. The campers gone,
Their merry laugh heard only in the leaves
Which, shaken by the wind, let free to air
The captured joy, the talking, cries and shouts.
The vines and bushes quiver now and then,
Moved by sweet memories of the kind young feet
Which only yesterday had trod them down.
There's scarce a sign of life in lake or wood.
But when all trace of human life is gone,
Then every burrow stirs, each nest awakes,
And suddenly the world's alive again.
Joy runs with freedom rampant everywhere,
For birds and beasts have now regained their home.

A LETTER TO A FRIEND.

“Hail, bard triumphant! born in happier days;
Immortal heir of universal praise!”

In lauding poets these two short lines do well;
Yet not of praise write I; only to tell
To you, my good friend, something in my mind:
A living thought, some phrases that shall bind
In natural friendship two congenial souls.
We met by chance; each striving to his goals,
Each deep intent on gaining all in life,
Each eager for the battle and the strife;
Yet neither one too blind to heart's desires
That he could slight the things his heart aspires.
So thus we met; now may we form a tie
Of lasting friendship which, though we must die,
Shall live forever in a human thought;
Of how together we two men had fought
Each other's battles, 'til our lives were done,
And as one soul, to gain our glory war,
Had fled to Heaven, neither one before,
And, still together, passed the Threshold o'er.

What says the poet about a “little learning”
May also be applied to friendship's yearning;
That, having ascertained a real friend's found,
Start intimacy on a solid ground.
Impressions quick-made just confuse the brain,
While longer friendship sobers us again.
Find strength in this companion of your choice;
Be calm to judge, hear only wisdom's voice.
Both see and dwell on that which suits your mind.
Take man as man, nor seek small faults to find.

Be not like one whose single aim is rise
By foul or fair means, who would cleave the skies.
And, since he'll ne'er work wonders with on High,
Does nothing else but fall to earth and die.
Ambitions, yes, and hopes of winning fame,
We have all these, we long to hear our name
Resound throughout the ages of the world
As we march on, our banners all unfurled.
But, oh—live out the truth that all may hear—
O'er every greedy fame let us hold dear
The only sacred thought of winning Love,
And, greater far, Respect. Hold these above
All meager hopes of glory and of wealth;
For praise and money oft are got by stealth.

Be your own impulse, live your natural plan;
Just be yourself, and you will be a man!

THE SONG OF MY SOUL.

I stood alone upon the mountain top,
 Euphanced by the song of all Spring's choir:
 I saw the dreary earth beneath me drop
 As in my dreams I floated high and higher:
 At length I stood upon the topmost peak
 Where all was clear and pure and sparkling life,
 And far below the world, so small and bleak,
 Ensnared in sorrow, passion, pain and strife.

And there I stood a king, with master none,
 The earth bowed down in homage at my feet;
 And only one thing greater, that the sun,
 The sun and I sat on the judgment seat.
 For in my soul was peace and joy divine,
 And all my heart was filled with wondrous love;
 All might was in my person; all was mine,
 From earth beneath me to the sky above.

A golden crown there was upon my head,
 My shoulders bore a robe of priestly white;
 And waited on by shadows of the dead,
 My left the women, men souls at my right.
 They bore to me a cup of cooling wine,
 And as I reached a voice spoke loud and clear,
 "The cup of happiness, drink, great sire, 'tis thine,
 One drop will give thee power, see, 'tis here!"

"For thou art chosen, oh most mighty One,
 To be the man who now shall free the world,
 'Tis thou shalt lead the pilgrims to the Sun.
 And they shall follow, banners all unfurled,
 Shall follow to this cup, and all shall drink,
 And in an instant all their sorrows cease.
 And thou shalt lead them all to Heaven's brink,
 For there the triumph, everlasting peace!"

And as it spoke mine eyes were filled with tears,
 A passionate sobbing swelled into my throat;
 That I should be the hope of all the years!—
 Another voice rang out, a strident note.
 "Oh, fool," it said, "how vain is human pride:
 Just see, they streak your priestly robe with mud,
 And how they jeer you, all your hopes deride.
 But look again, the cup is filled with blood!"

I snatched the cup, and gazed with quickening breath,
And shrank in horror from the fearful scene;
My soul was numb, my heart was cold as death,
And all despair, where only joy had been.
For in the deep red this what I saw,
Great wild and furious things which we call men,
Who at each other's throats like beasts would claw,
And tear each other's hearts, and kill—and then—

The scene changed quickly to a quieter place.
Great pools of sticky red were on the ground;
A man lay there with upturned, bloody face,
And other men just like him, all around.
And over all the scene a hideous wail
From dying lips in anguish rose and fell;
Blank, open eyes stared at the sky, so pale.
What countless hopes were dead! Can Heaven tell?

And then I saw a far off tiny light
Which shone from distant miles across the sea,
A spark of love it glowed through all the night.
I closer peered, to learn what it might be.
A candle light, a mother sitting there;
Each night she sat and dreamed about her son;
Her tender eyes are lifted now in prayer,
"Oh bring him back, he is my only one!"

I saw the world of business, money-mad,
I saw men sweat, and curse, and rob, and cheat,
A man was honored, be he good or bad,
Who tramped the greatest gold beneath his feet,
What soul there once had been was now long dead;
The only object here was gaining wealth.
A great concern, with avarice at the head,
And business carried on through crooked stealth.

I saw drawn faces, women's faces too,
With haggard eyes which gleamed from circles dark,
With lips and skin a livid sickly hue,
For health had fled, where slavery left its mark.
Poor souls imprisoned, hearts with shackles bound,
As human hearts as ever heart did beat;
Still yearning for the joy they ne'er had found,
And stumbling through the dark with weary feet.

So war and weeping, avarice and greed,
 With death, destruction, and all human woe,
 They all passed through the cup with lightning speed,
 My heart was broken and I wept,—but oh
 I thought just then of all my glory there;
 The voice had said that I shall be the man,
 That I was chosen to stamp out all care!
 I flung the cup far from me, and I ran.

Swiftly I ran, with ne'er a backward glance,
 On toward the darkness where all misery dwelt,
 And all my former joy seemed but a trance,
 For in my swelling heart such joy I felt,
 That I should be the man to free the world,
 And lead the pilgrims to their hearts' desire!
 I saw their banners even now unfurled,
 Soon they should hear the song of all Spring's choir.

My crown was gone, my priestly robe was torn
 As now I reached the valley of the night,
 My face was bleeding, and the clothes I'd worn
 Were cut to shreds, so wild had been my flight.
 And there the sluggish human stream flowed by.
 I stood upon a rock with hand upraised.

"Stop, stop!" I cried, "all sorrow's end is nigh!"
 They turned and looked upon me, stupid, dazed.

"I bear to you a cup of cooling wine.
 Oh fly with me, ye pilgrims of the sun;
 I'll lead you to the place of joy divine,
 I'll make you kings and queens, yes, every one!
 I'll give you freedom, ease, and comfort, too,
 You'll know what love is, everlasting peace,
 And there you'll find your souls, and live anew,
 And break your bonds, and all your chains release."

"Oh come ye, I'm the man, the Voice has said.
 The skies I govern, and the earth is mine.
 We'll form an empire, you shall be the head,
 To you I'll give the power, 'twill all be thine!
 And there together all at peace we'll live
 In happy union all our mortal day.
 And what you wish for, name it, I shall give,
 The path is steep, I only know the way."

“So, war, your day is done, put up your arms.
And cease your mourning, weary hearts bereaved.
Ye money-mad, from cities, homes, and farms,
Your eyes now open, ye so long deceived.
And all you slavers feel your freedom now,
There’s but one master, and that one is you.
Just know what Life is, come, I’ll show you how.
I’ll point the method, then ’tis yours to do.”

Then stopping, each in turn raised up his head:
How eager did I wait for what they said!

“That I should break my sword and disappear!”
So scoffed the war-like one in hollow voice,
“That war should be no more! I have no fear:
We men will always fight, we have no choice.
Go back from whence you came, you dreaming one,
I care not for your tales of blissful life:
I’m happy where the streams of blood shall run
And slaughtering murderous Death unsheathes his knife.”

The mother spoke: “You’d have me mourn no more?”
You’d dry my tears when they have killed my boy,
You’d have me happy, when my heart is sore?
You’d have me joyful when they’ve murdered joy?
His spirit’s fled, his body rots away.
Oh tell me where, I long to see the place
Where his sweet body, mangled, torn, last lay.
I long to hear his voice, to see his face!”

“They drive me, drive me, drive, it is not I.”
So spoke the man whose soul was money-lust.
“ ’Tis competition: others cheat and lie.
And when they do, why don’t you see, I must!
My next door neighbor has a fine new car,
And how he scorns me as he rumbles past:
So I must have a new one, better far,
I’ll spend my savings, though it be my last.”

“And we who slave,” the feeble toiler spoke,
“We have no will; oh say, what power have we?
We drudge and sweat, in dirt and dust and smoke,
By moneyed power oppressed: we’ll ne’er be free!
So wake not in our heart such far, vain dreams,
Just leave us: here we work, and here we die.
We’ve heard of open air, but then it seems
At times to us as if there is no sky.”

Then of a sudden all began to rave,
 And stooping down they showered me with mud.
 "Oh stay!" I cried, "I come your souls to save!"
 But with one instinct, as a surging flood,
 They bore upon me, beat me, tore my hair.
 Then quickly stopped, and white, as if in fear,
 They shambled on, and left me wounded there,
 While I raiser up, and watched them disappear.

This prayer I offered as I weeping lay,
 Alone, in darkness, soul-sick and distressed.
 It spoke my heart—it speaks my heart today,
 It speaks my heart for every man oppressed.

Oh world, world world,
 The world that I love so well,
 I sought to lead you on up to the heights,
 And this is how I fell!

Oh soul of my brother man,
 I tried to show you the light,
 But now I have slipped from that clear bright way
 And sunk to the deepest night.

Oh hearts which beat as mine
 I offered you everything.
 I wanted to show you a distant land,
 I wanted to make you king.

Oh people whom I have met,
 Is it nothing at all to you
 That I have wanted to give you all,
 What I think or say or do?

But whether you wish or not,
 Still do I love you so,
 Still every breath will I give for you.
 Oh surely you must know!

And from the stillness of the vast unknown
 There came to me an answer, strong and clear.
 So take this answer, take it for your own.
 Oh come, my brothers, open heart, and hear!

"Peace to your heart, and comfort to your soul.
 Faithful servant, feebl, blinded child.
 But know your deep desire shall make you whole.
 As you strive onward, by vain hopes beguiled.
 It seems oftimes as if you fight for naught.
 Your efforts futile, everything in vain;
 And yet there's something—know that you have fought
 For some one else: in sacrifice your gain."

"You thought you stood upon the mountain height.
 Why there? You are no God, you are a man.
 You thought to put an end to misery's night.
 There's grief and sorrow since the world began.
 Your place is in the valley, down below,
 Where other men can struggle by your side:
 But if you feel you know the way to go,
 Lead firmly on, and make yourself their guide."

"You have no power to claim yourself a king.
 Each man is free, if he but use his might:
 And every man should govern everything.
 It is his heritage, it is his right.
 Heart, soul, and mind, in every man the same.
 God gave them to you, for each one to use,
 It matters not his rank, nor what his name:
 But his own method every man to choose."

"I know that sometimes, in the still of night,
 You're lying open-eyed upon your bed,
 And staring through the gloom to find the light,
 And feeling for the wreath upon your head.
 But light and fame are just beyond your reach.
 A fervent prayer draws tears into your eyes,
 Your lips are moving, yet can find no speech,
 To bring your supplication to the skies."

"At length comes sleep. You revel then in dreams,
 And all you wished for seems to have come true,
 Your nights of longing ended: now it seems
 All strength and might are yours, all power to do.
 But when you waken this all fades away,
 You realize what a little thing you are.
 Reality comes with the light of day:
 You lose your dreams, you lose your shining star.

"Do you not know where is your highest peak?
 Do you not know where you shall find your goal?
 In human eyes that meet yours, stop and speak;
 In human hearts, and in human soul.
 Oh, there's your joy, and there your clear, bright life;
 To know your neighbor, and let him know you,
 To bear his burden, help him in the strife;
 For you are human, he is human too."

"The little things of life bring happiness,
 The simple things, they speak of love divine.
 Bring comfort to a heart in deep distress.
 Bring strength—ah, there's the cup of purest wine!
 And if some one rejects your cooling draught,
 If they would rather thirst to death than live,
 Think not your efforts have been made for naught,
 Your joy is not in thanks, but just to give."

"So love your neighbor, therein is your might,
 Forget yourself, and live for other men;
 Self sacrifice, oh there's your mountain height,
 Your priestly robe will ne'er be muddy then.
 And what the Voice said as it spoke to you
 About your power, it may be Heaven's plan
 That you should lead the world, it may be true.
 Just ask your conscience if you are the man."

And now with eager step I mount the tower:
 The people wait, their banners closely furled.
 Oh unseen Father, grant me then that power,
 Not for myself—for Thee, and for Thy world!

TO THE YOUNG RECRUITS.

At a last review before sailing.

March on, march on, you bravest of the brave,
You younger ones, who've yet all life to live.

The middle-aged have tasted life,
The old ones soon must die.
The women, too, know pain and strife,
Their brightest days gone by.
But you, ah you the younger ones,
Who've yet all life to live,
You pay the price, aye, more than pay,
For everything you give!

All life to you is happy now,
To you is grief unknown,
Before you stretches all the world,
All joy, and all your own!
See, there you stand, aglow with pride,
Just on the brink of Day—
Then war begins, your spirits up,
And carry you away.

Why do you go? You know not why.
Of reason there is none.
But duty calls, the fight is on,
And honor must be won.
But why go ye so eagerly
From cities, homes and farms?
A nameless spark stirs up your blood
And bids you shoulder arms.
A nameless spark which yet you know
To be your manhood's soul,
Which hurls you through the thickest fight,
Which drives you to the goal.
And what is it you're fighting for?
To prove that you are men!
To prove that you are sons of God!
For Country, Home! So then—

March on, march on, you bravest of the brave,
Your souls will live throughout eternal time;
Your proof is good to men and God,
And you, His Own, are now sublime!
And you at last sublime!

THE VOICE.

Before the sun has touched with light
 The lifeless forms around you,
 Before the bugle yet has called
 Another fight to death,
 Before the Prince of Peace has loosed
 The cords of sleep which bond you,
 Before the cooling air of night
 Has changed to poisoned breath,
 You hear throughout the space between,
 Beneath, around, above you,
 A voice of love, of hope, of life
 Which says, "My son, I love you."

At noontime in the heat of fight
 While bullets whistle by you—
 An expert shot you've grown to be,
 You wear a medal too—
 You're hidden in a wooden trench
 Lest sentinals desery you;
 You see a man and shoot him down,
 He'd do the same to you.
 He makes no sound, but fires his gun,
 The bullet hits above you.
 He dies. Two voices then you hear,
 Which say, "My son, I love you."

At night the moon is dark and low,
 And fevered chills run through you,
 Your ears can't hear, your eyes can't see,
 Your body's cold and damp;
 Your throat is dry and hot as flame,
 They'll bring no water to you;
 You're lying wounded, near to death,
 Inside a Red Cross camp.
 Your eyes are blinded now with light,
 You see a face above you,
 And ringing in your ears a voice,
 Which says: "My son, I love you."

THE SILENT ONE.

Clear through the crash of gun,
Over the bursting shell,
Quicker than cowards' run,
Louder than victors' yell,
Hear you the gentle plea,
Hark to the tender call,
Mothers cross the sea,
Innocent victims all.

Hear you the stifled sob?
See you the death-like face?
Feel you the hearts that throb,
Stiring the endless space,
Stretching from shore to shore,
Binding each mother's son,
Strong in the blood and gore,
Lost be the fight or won?
That is a Mother's soul —
That is a woman's love—
Driving to victors' goal,
True as the stars above;
She is the martyr here,
Her's be the crown of gold,
Yet what she's had to bear,
Hush—it must ne'er be told.

ECCE FILLUS TUUS.

The hearthfire softly gleams at eventide,
 And flickering shadows play about the room,
 The last pale light of day has slowly died,
 The stars creep out, and gently now the moon
 Pours out her liquid-silver beams, which glide
 Into all corners, and light up the gloom.

Pale clouds of smoke in mystic circles rise,
 Short yellow flames grow bright and disappear,
 And from far corners echoes, fairy sighs
 Bring back again the voice you long to hear,
 Bring back the voice—and as you close your eyes
 You feel His presence, know that He is near.

Oh sweetest mother, dry your tender eyes
 And rest your head upon my shoulder—so,
 And we alone, dear, shall we search the skies
 And find the memories of that long ago.
 Oh dream yourself a bird, which freely flies
 To that far land which men shall never know.

“I see my baby boy, so new from Heaven,
 I feel his lips pressed close against my breast.
 I know the joy, to mothers only given
 Of building for my little one a nest
 Close in my heart, that some cruel day when driven
 Shelter-seeking, there he may find rest.”

His sturdy limb, so clean and pure his skin,
 His voice and eye so firm, yet soft and true,
 His noble heart, his soul unknown to sin—
 Oh how you cherished, guarded as he grew,
 And watched each sign of growing truth within,
 As mysteries of life were born anew.

You watched him through each day with loving care,
 At bed-time when he, hesitating, crept
 With backward glances up the gloomy stair
 You came behind him softly—and you wept
 As, kneeling down, he whispered God his prayer.
 You tip-toed in and kissed him as he slept.

And now a youth, so stalwart, care-free, strong,
 There grew within his heart a tiny flame—
 His soul rejoiced and sang a wild new song,
 And in an instant your young boy became
 A man, who realized right and wrong—
 But looked on life as some new, happy game.

And happy as he lived he died the same.
Weep not, oh mother, he has played the game!
The last thing in this world he spoke your name.

“He was my son, my living son, oh hear!
He was my life, my soul, my everything.
He was my hope, my joy, my dread and fear.
He was the spark of life which I did bring
Into this world to love, to live—and then—
Thy will not ours be done, oh Lord—amen.”

“I stretch my arms thy dear form to embrace,
Oh son of mine, I call thee back from death.
Oh touch my hand, look thou into my face,
But press my heart, and let me feel thy breath.
Come thou from Heaven, shine through endless space
And whisper in my ear—There is no death!”

“I hear you, Mother, standing by your side;
Do you not feel my lips upon your cheek?
I have not left you, I have simply died,
Still I am with you; can’t not hear me speak?
Why are you sorrowful, and why have you cried?
For death is joyful, only life is bleak.”

“Oh many a son doth mourn a mother dead,
And mothers weeping for their sons in vain;
And many a night on many a troubled bed
They long for sleep to ease the lonesome pain.
So take each other—as our God hath said—
That each one’s loss may be the other’s gain.”

“So now, behold your son, oh gracious Mother,
And son, behold your mother, she is here!
Open your mournful hearts, embrace each other—
And know through all your love that I am near.
I care not who, I am your son and brother,
And I shall never leave you, have no fear.”

“Our Father’s House is large, and now I go
In order to prepare a place for you,
That where I am there may you be also,
And joined eternal we shall live anew.
Dark clouds and grey oppress you now below,
But raise your tearful eyes—the sky is blue!”

“Will some one guard my Mother, faithful, true?”

“Dost hear me, dearest Mother? I love you!”

MEMORIES.

Once a Sailor, After the War.

I have felt the wind through my salty hair,
I have felt the spray on my shoulders bare,
I have felt the sting of the northern air,
 Over the foaming sea.
I have felt the waves in their restless might,
I have felt the throb of a boundless night,
I have felt the thrill of a death-doomed fight—
 And the joy of a soul that's free!

Oh the open sea and the wind-swept air,
And the sky and the water everywhere,
Where a man's a man, and he has no care
 But life and liberty.
Where his heart is big and his arm is strong,
And his thoughts are free and he knows no wrong,
Where he lives his life as a great wild song—
 And he dreams Eternity.

Let me have my dreams of the days gone by,
Let me see those visions in the sky,
Let me live again—oh my soul doth cry
 For the life as I knew it then!
And now as I sit in my office chair,
With routine drear and irksome care,
Oh Memories hearken to my prayer—
 Forsake me not, amen.

MY PRAYER FOR MY MEN.

*Detachment Liberty Ignition and Motor Experts.
St. Marient, France, 1918.*

A hundred souls are mine,
A hundred hearts are Thine and mine, O Lord,
To do Thy will;
And eyes to watch my goings out and comings in,
Hands stretched forth to feel my way,
And feet to follow faithful in my path.

So grant, O gracious Lord, so perfect I,
With heart and soul of mine so fully Thine,
My hands to do thy bidding, and my feet
Set always in Thy straight and narrow way,
That leading them, my men, I lead them but to Thee.

And all my glory, when this life is done,
My all supreme reward to see
My men, my souls, my hearts around Thy Throne,
To see them, Lord, with glory lit,
While I, their leader, humbly kneel,
And give them, Lord, to Thee.
So take, oh, take my men,
For they are Thine.

THEY KNOW!

*When my friends were persuading me to enter
business life.*

“All the world’s a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages.”

But in each act, each year, each month, each day,
How many different masks one man assumes!
'Tis this makes any life a tragedy.
Inconstancy in man—ah, what a curse!
To smile, while in the heart is rankling hate;
To laugh, to laugh while tears should drown the eyes;
To scorn, when honor is the thing we feel;
Seem well, when there is misery in the soul!
Ah, base dissembling, hideous mask and veil,
In which we seek to hide our truer selves;
Which leads us into actions 'gainst our will,
And makes us speak things not our truthful mind;
By which we seem to love a class of men
That's not indeed our natural heart's desire;
And has us treat with distant, cold reserve
Those dearer ones to whom our souls would cling.
They know it not—they know not of our love.
But, yea, they do; for surely they must feel—
Ah, they must feel towards us as we towards them,
And loving us as we love them at heart,
But just as us, afraid—
Afraid of what?
Afraid of “What will people say?”

ARISE.

Being my decision to leave the narrow confines of business and return to the bigger life, August 12, 1919.

Where is the fire that once burned in my heart,
And where the stream that flowed through all my soul?
Where is the strength which rent the clouds apart
And stood me on the heights before my goal?

Where is the song that once sprang from my lips.
And where the sun that glowed within my eyes?
Where is the power that, as my footstep slips,
Carries me on and upward to the skies?

Oh where the life, the hope, the joy, the love,
Where th' eternal spirit of the song?
Sunk in darkness, banished from above,
Tortured life—Great Soul, how long, how long?

I saw the dawn break on the mountain top.
I heard the murmur of the crystal brook,
I felt the golden veil around be drop,
I saw my dreams writ down, an open book.

Snatched from the triumph visioned,
Hurled from my dream of life,
Shackled and bound, imprisoned
In darkness and torment, strife—
Still do I lift my feeble eyes,
Still do I stretch my hand,
Always up to the radiant skies
And to the mountain land.

Deep in my heart still burning
That fire once so brightly glowed,
Deep in my soul the stream still lives
Which one time so proudly flowed;
And even the song and the sun are there
Close in the darkness furled—
Oh strength, break my bonds, feel the mountain air,
And show my soul to the world!

Then burn my fire, and flow my stream,
Song and my sun arise,
Again my feet tread the mountain way,
And nothing stop 'till the skies, the skies!
And only stop in the skies!

THE STAR.

Out of the quiet of my slumbering soul,
Into the quiet of night,
Out of the void where the dream-clouds roll,
And a feeble star gives light,
Doth swell the sigh of a stifled cry,
And a longing takes its flight.

“Show me the place where my dreams come true,
Where doth my vision lie?
When will the spark flame up anew?
That spark which I left to die.
Where flows the stream in its crystal gleam,
As the golden clouds float by?”

Soon comes the day when my soul must wake,
Roused by a light afar;
Soon comes the day when my cords must break,
Shattered the prison bar.
Spark, vision, stream, and my dearest dream,
All shall come true, and I'll live anew,
My joy in a flaming star!

FREEDOM.

Be free in your thought, be free in your soul,
Be free as the birds that fly;
Be free in the choosing your aim, your goal,
And only stop at the sky.

Be free in your actions and free in your speech,
Be free in the song you sing;
Fling out your arms wide, and boundless your reach,
For freedom is everything!

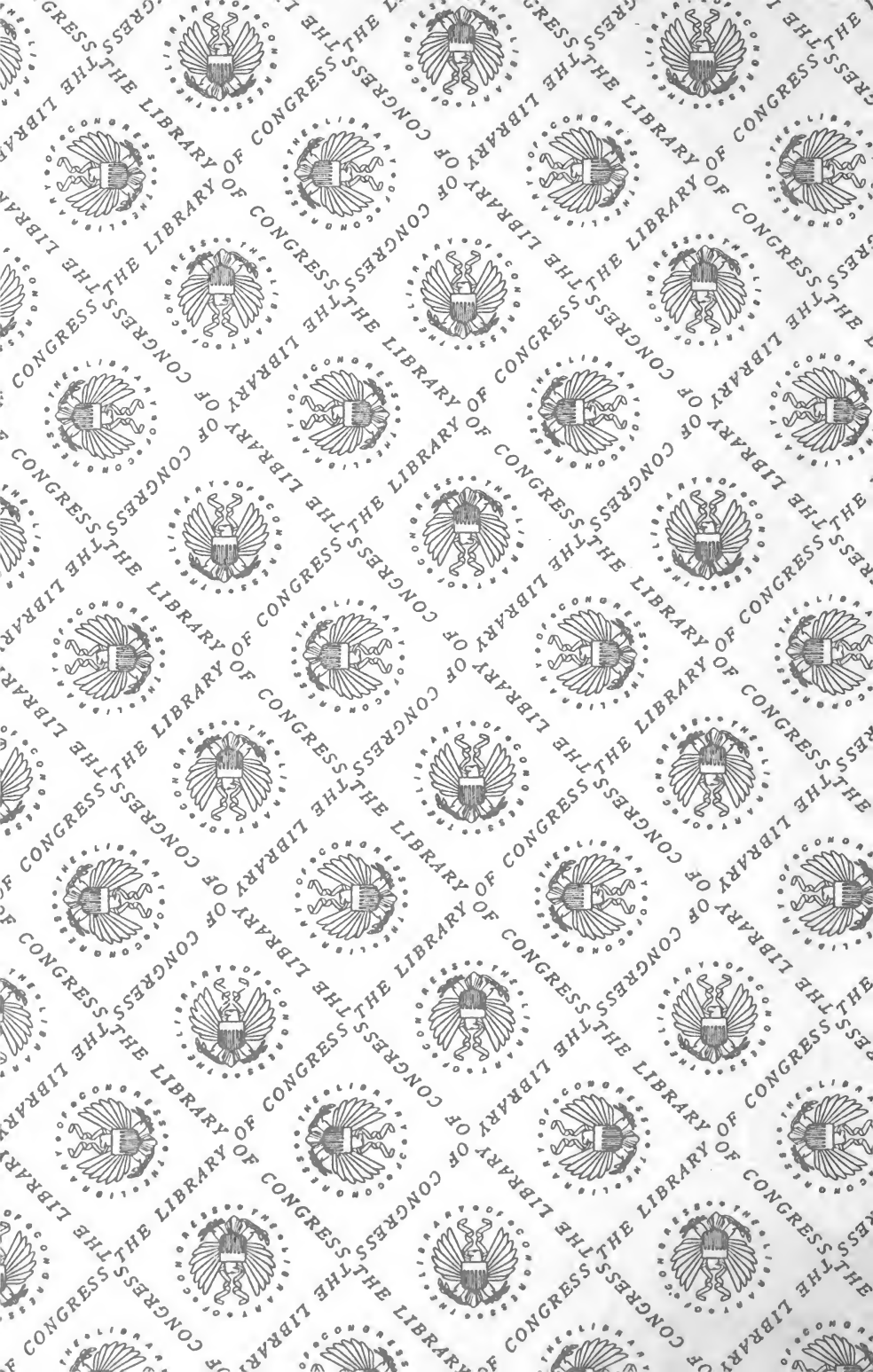
GOOD NIGHT.

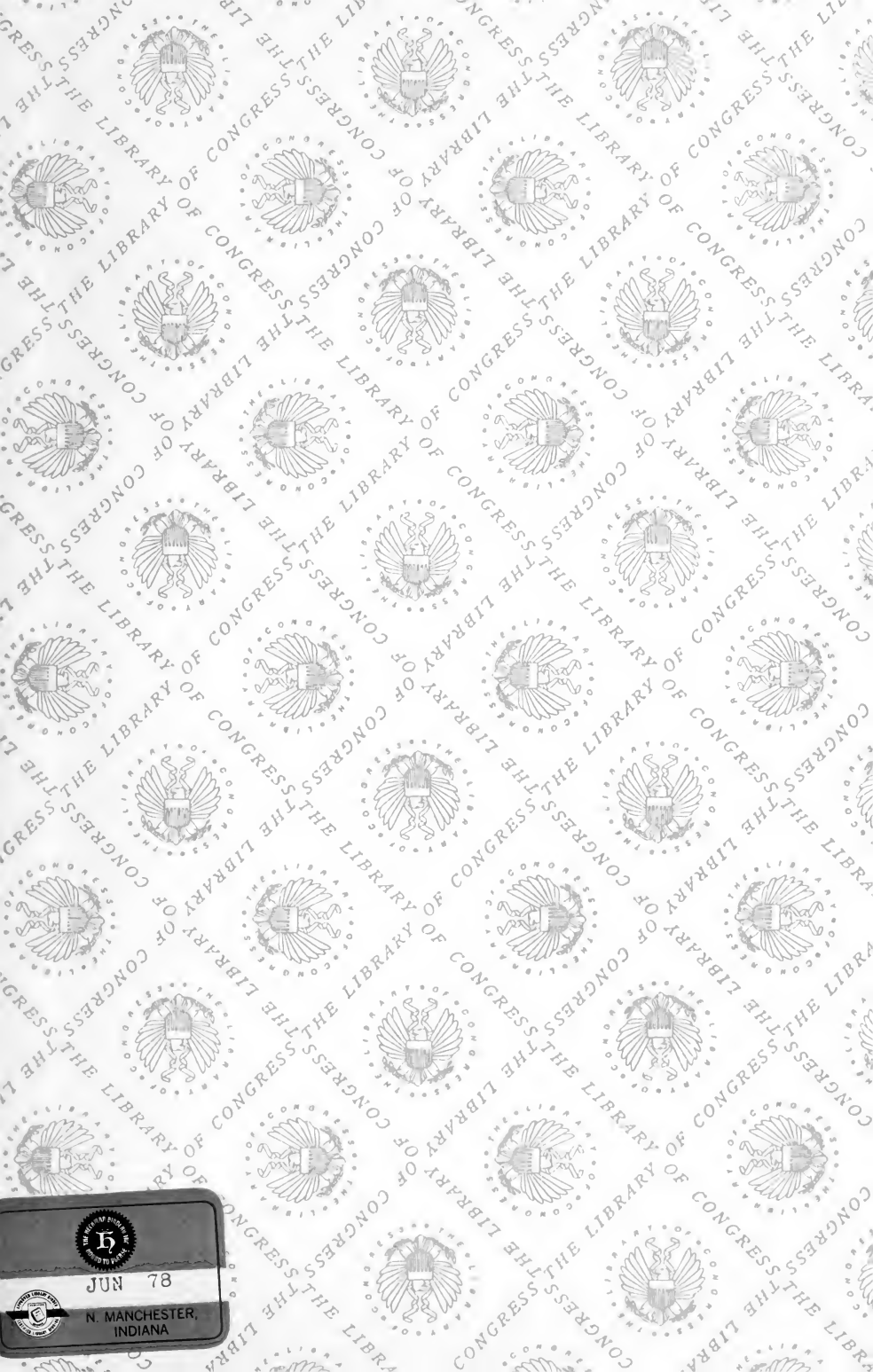
Then, good night, and peace attend thee,
Heaven bless, and God defend thee;
And when gleams of day awake thee,
May no harm nor fear o'ertake thee;
Pray that joy will n'er forsake thee,
All through thy life.

IN the summer of 1915 I learned Charles Henry Meltzer's translation "The Sunken Bell" (from Gerhart Hauptman, published by Doubleday, Page and Co.) and realized that it had a great influence in forming my thoughts. On reading over this collection of my poems I discovered that I have made use, in three instances, of phrases from "The Sunken Bell." I refer to the second line of the first stanza of "The Song of My Love," and to the ideas of leading the pilgrims to the Sun, and working wonders with On High. I beg the indulgence of Mr. Meltzer and his publishers.

—Oscar Wilder Craik.

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